

LUXURY LIVING

The *luxury* shopping experience

In the world of luxury, true opulence isn't found in a digital cart; it's discovered in the tactile splendour of in-person shopping, where every sense is indulged and every detail is considered

BY SARA DUCK

When it comes to shopping for luxury home goods, the path from pining to purchasing has undergone a significant transformation. It's no longer click, add, buy (often on impulse!). The act of shopping has become an event. With more customers moving offline and in-store, the feeling is that consumers want more from the luxury shops they spend their money at.

Reflecting on the pandemic era when online shopping took centre stage, it undeniably offered convenience, but it also left a void in terms of human connection. Post-pandemic, consumers crave a richer engagement with physical stores. They yearn to engage with experts, luxuriate in the feel of sumptuous fabrics, and savour the assistance and ambience that only in-person shopping can provide.

"Luxury home stores offer a highly personalized one-on-one interaction, enriched by the brand's profound knowledge. This interaction instantly adds value when making significant purchasing decisions," says designer Jessica Cinnamon of Jessica Cinnamon Design.

Of course, online retail isn't disappearing; rather, in-person shopping is experiencing a zenith of influence! Recent statistics revealed that a whopping 82 per cent of Canadians prefer the tactile experience of buying furniture in person.

"It's challenging to convey the quality of workmanship in a product or share the 'experience' of a brand online," explains Richard Sakic, owner of Calligaris, a revered Italian company with a century-long legacy. "All the augmented reality tools in the world cannot rep-



Calligaris offers functional and elegant furniture, with a particular attention to sustainability and a respect for the environment.



Every aspect was carefully considered in the design of the showroom. Focusing on stimulating the senses and creating an emotional response for consumers. PHOTOS BY STEPHANI BUCHMAN

licate how a fine Italian woven fabric feels to the touch or how the colour and texture interact with the lighting throughout the day."

Calligaris has recently set up shop in Toronto's Castlefield Design District, a premier destination for design enthusiasts. Their expansive showroom is not just a retail space, but an immersive environment expertly designed to curate an entire lifestyle.

Here, customers aren't merely buying products; they are stepping into a carefully crafted narrative that aligns with their identity.

"Every detail was meticulously considered, with a focus on stimulating the senses and evoking an emotional response," says Sakic. "As you step into our showroom, you should feel transported to a different world — one that is warm, inviting, and intimate. The

scent, sound, lighting and product presentation all harmonize to create this unique atmosphere."

They worked with the Calligaris design team in Italy and Italian architect Daniele Lo Scalzo Moschieri on the design of the showroom and furniture selection to create a truly luxury shopping experience.

As more discerning consumers gravitate towards brick-and-mortar stores, establishments like Calli-

garis step forward with bespoke offerings that empower customers to infuse their homes with personalized decor, expressing their unique tastes and style sensibilities. However, navigating the expansive realm of luxury decor necessitates the guiding hand of an expert.

"Imagine that a single chair model can effortlessly yield over 700 potential variations or consider a model that

extends to a staggering 100,000 possible choices," Sakic elaborates. "This realm of possibilities can craft an exclusive product combination, a manifestation of your individuality — a creation entirely your own. We are here to facilitate your journey towards that unique masterpiece."

Another significant shift in luxury shopping is the growing emphasis on sustainability. "Today's luxury consumers seek not only exquisite design but also ethical and sustainable practices," says Cinnamon. "They are drawn to brands that are committed to environmental and social responsibility." Luxury stores have swiftly responded by incorporating sustainable and eco-friendly elements into their manufacturing, designs and product offerings.

Sakic sees this sustainable shift and welcomes it. "With the transparency afforded consumers these days, they are shopping for more than just products. They want to align themselves with brands that share and reflect their values," says Sakic. "From messaging and product design to manufacturing and materials sourcing, owning luxury products becomes a badge of honour, as personal values are represented in the brands we purchase."

Modern consumers aren't settling for simple transactions; they want a luxury shopping experience that resonates with their desire for authenticity and connection with the products they bring into their lives. The luxury shopping environment is expected to captivate their senses, tell a compelling story, and offer a personalized, sustainable, and enriched journey. It's no longer just about what we buy; it's about how we experience luxury from start to finish.

Wine not?

Wine walls in homes are growing in popularity, taking a place as a pièce-de-résistance design feature for oenophiles and party hosts alike

BY SILVANA LONGO

As the sun sets on a rather wet and overall cooler summer, most Ontarians feel cheated out of their highly anticipated, much beloved patio season.

While the outdoor entertaining time this year may have been sporadic and cut short, as we migrate indoors we can find some solace by elevating the entertaining experience and adding a wine wall to our living space.

Acting as part storage, part design feature, there's something about a floor-to-ceiling glass display of a treasured wine collection that says you are back in the party zone.

Whether you are a wine

enthusiast or enjoy hosting friends and family, or both, the popularity of the wine wall is gaining traction.

"Designating a space for wine storage is a common request these days as homeowners stress the importance of convenience, hosting and entertaining guests, as well as elevating their overall living experience," says architect Andria Fong, founder of YY Studio.

Once relegated to dark basement cellars in tightly packed wood compartments, Fong has seen wine rise from the shadows into feature display walls of main rooms in both new and old houses.

"Wine walls tend to be placed by the kitchen or dining room for easy

access; however, they can also be great backdrops to any recreation room or office," says Fong.

Lately they are showing up in the most unexpected places. "I recently added a wine wall in a hallway, adjacent to the homeowner's dining room," says Darlene Janeiro, principal of Darlene Janeiro Design.

In this case, the kitchen and dining room didn't have the footprint to accommodate a full-scale wine wall; however, that didn't dissuade the client from adding one. Besides the practical storage solution, it is a coveted artistic feature that can be admired from any vantage point.

"There is an opening from the hallway into the dining room so you see it

from there and can appreciate it even though it is tucked away in the hallway," says Janeiro.

Beyond the space considerations, there are a few technical aspects a contractor will implement to carefully preserve your collection. Like a wine cellar, which is a much more substantive and costly undertaking with an entire room in the home dedicated to wine, Janeiro advises that systems that ensure a cooling system, proper ventilation and humidity control must be in place.

However, there are two main types of wine display; one that is temperature-controlled and the other is purely for display. "The former requires mechanical cooling units

more so allocated for larger capacity spaces where the walls can be insulated effectively.

"The latter has endless possibilities and is only limited to the dimensions of a wine bottle. A wine wall could take up less than six inches off a perimeter wall in a house or act as an intriguing 16-inch partition between rooms," advises Fong.

Whichever type you choose, rest assured that custom features such as rack systems and mirrors are what will make a wine wall unique as well as an impactful focal point. The sky is the limit, although Fong admits she finds design inspiration from the wine bottles themselves.

"They hold key aesthetic qualities that have influenced my choice of materials for wine walls." She cites particulars like the colour of the wine, the uniqueness of the labels, the reflective curved glass exterior. "Thin metal supports and full-height glass walls create an airy weightlessness while heavily textured wood and strong clean lines create a fascinating contrast."

Fong emphasizes that what takes a wine wall to the next-level is the lighting. "Concealed linears, controlled pin lights are a couple of examples of how to take advantage of the

reflective and translucent qualities of wine bottles," she says.

Choosing the wrong type of lighting may tamper with the correct temperature of the wine as well as harmful UV exposure. By using LED lights and adding dimmer controls, you reduce this risk and can set the mood for intimate dinners and evening entertaining.

If you're considering adding a wine wall in your next renovation, both Fong and Janeiro agree that you don't have to wait for a major redesign to do that. In fact, incorporating one that seamlessly fits in with the style of your home is quite common and doable.

How does Fong explain its growing popularity? "There has always been a level of emotion and intrigue associated with wine, a flavour that generates a mood, whether bright and cheerful or dark and mysterious. A well-designed wine wall can capture the character of the wine and the homeowner."

If you think your home doesn't have the space, think again. Both a show-stopper and party-ready design feature, stock up on your favourite French reds as the glistening bottles will make the perfect backdrop for your next party.



Ideally situated in the dining room, this wine wall exudes a modern, clean look. Simple custom millwork panels and contrasting reveals are the backdrop that wrap up the wall and onto the ceiling, cleverly concealing the wine cooling unit above. "We used black vino pins to mount the wine," says Jessica Cinnamon, principal of Jessica Cinnamon Design. "The subtle design details seamlessly blend with the overall aesthetic of the home, and allows the wine to be the true star of the show."

STEPHANI BUCHMAN PHOTOGRAPHY